Newsletter of Deccan Birders (formerly Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh)
New Series Volume 22 Number 10 September 2025

FIELD TRIP-1: Sunday, September 7, 2025, 6.00AM: Keesara, Medchal-Malkajgiri Dist. Coordinator(s): Gowthama Poludasu (Mobile: 94409-10967)

Keesara, located in the Medchal-Malkajgiri district, is a picturesque area known for its historic temple and the surrounding reserve forest. The landscape is characterized by a beautiful valley, small hillocks, and lush greenery, which provides a serene backdrop for birdwatching. The habitat mainly consists of scrub jungle and open forest, which attracts a variety of bird species native to the Deccan plateau. The area around Keesara offers a chance to see a mix of resident and local migratory birds. While it is still an emerging birding hotspot, the diverse vegetation supports a good number of species. Birdwatchers can look for common birds such as the Grey Francolin, Painted Francolin, Rain Quail, Indian Roller, and around 60 other species, including birds of prey and other open-country species. This trip offers a great opportunity to explore and document the avian diversity of this beautiful and historically significant area.

FIELD TRIP-2: Sunday, September 21, 2025, 6.30AM: Mokila. Meeting Point (s): Morine Bakery, Narsingi, 6.00AM; Keesara, 6.30AM. Coordinator(s): Gokul Krishna (Mobile: 99453-46585)

Mokila is a dry-deciduous scrub habitat which holds rich birding. So please come and enjoy a Sunday outing, watch some lovely birds and spend some time out in nature. Some common species found in this area: Eurasian Collared Dove, Blue-tailed Bee-eater, Small Minivet, Bay-backed Shrike, Siberian Stonechat, Eurasian Hoopoe, Wire-tailed Swallow and many more.

Both trips will be half-day trips, so carry adequate water and breakfast/snacks, and protective gear if required. Covid protocols will be followed; please ensure you wear masks, carry a sanitiser and maintain social distancing. Non-members are most welcome; however, they are requested to contribute Rs. 100/- per person to the Deccan Birders kitty. New Deccan Birders hats and caps will be available for purchase; please carry adequate cash.

BIRDING AT DEHRADUN
Trip Report: Dehradun, June 24-30, 2025

Text: Vijaya & Dhiraj Kaveri; Photos: Vijaya Kaveri

A view of the ICCON 2025 venue

We had the privilege of attending the Indian Conservation Conference (ICCON 2025) at the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), Dehradun from June 24-28, 2025. It was an inspiring learning experience — witnessing young scholars present their research, and experts deliver insightful talks on environment and wildlife conservation.

One of the key takeaways for us from the conference was Prof BC Choudhury's plenary talk and his strong message on Preventive/Proactive Conservation.

We also engaged with delegates from across the country, exchanging thoughts on the conservation challenges and initiatives happening in different regions.

Though the WII campus is known as a birding hotspot, the monsoon clouds and intermittent rain kept us from exploring much of its avian life. But we did still manage to explore the beautiful trail around the lake. The foliage on the trail and the beautiful green canopy was worth getting lost in.

WII Campus forest trail

Kachnar Dehradun Homestay

Post-conference, we moved to Kachnar Dehradun Homestay at Gangol Panditwari, nestled at the foothills of Mussoorie. This place turned out to be a birdwatcher's haven, perched as it was at the edge of a hill, overlooking a lush valley and dense forest.

Kachnar Dehradun Homestay

Red-whiskered Bulbul

The air was filled with the songs of Red-vented, Red-whiskered and Himalayan Bulbuls, and Oriental Magpie Robins. Some even nested in the corners and crevices of the homestay itself!

Himalayan Bulbul

Oriental Magpie Robin

We also often caught fleeting glimpses of Indian White-eyes darting about, busy foraging for food and nesting material.

Indian White-eye

Indian Peafowl

In spite of the rainy weather, we were lucky to spot:

- Indian Peafowl gracefully perched atop tall trees
- Black Kites soaring overhead, and also, sometimes, perched
- A Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon resting high up
- A diligent Pygmy Woodpecker at work
- Indian Grey Hornbills gliding across the valley

Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon

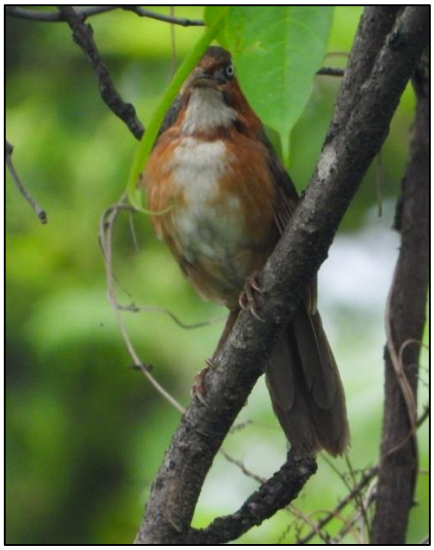
Wire-tailed Swallow

Each bird sighting was special – but it was the symphony of bird songs that truly made the experience soul-soothing.

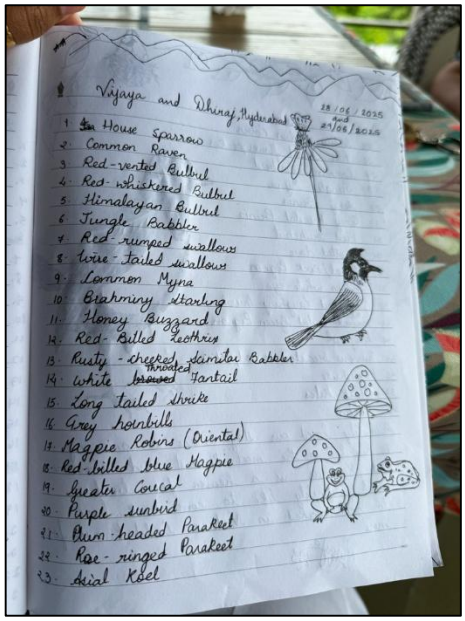
Black Kite

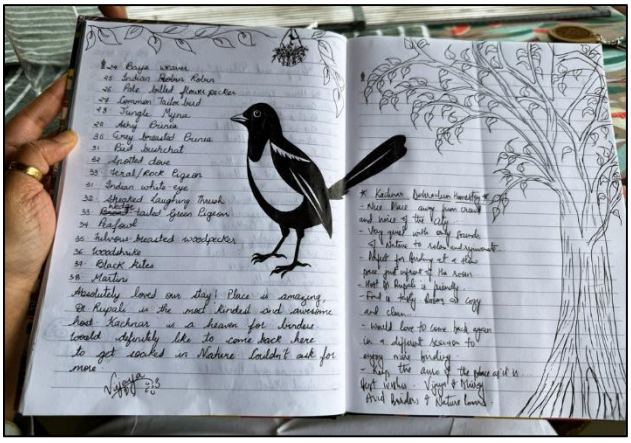
Jungle Babbler

A leisurely walk through the nearby village revealed more treasures – Hornbills, Babblers, Red-wattled Lapwings, and others.

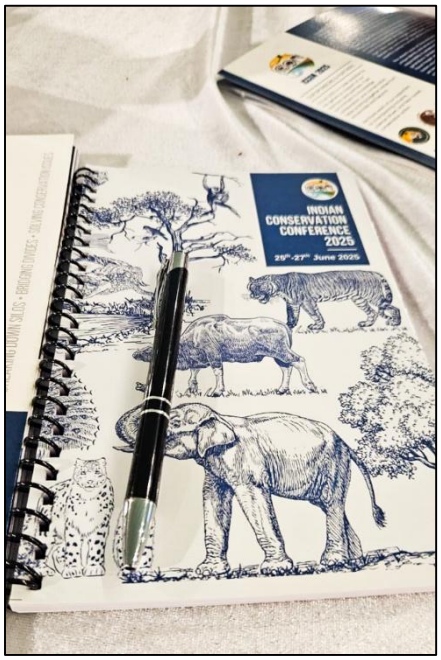


Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler




Absolutely loved our stay! Place is amazing, & Rupak is the most kindest and awesome host. Kachnar is a heaven for birdies. Would definitely like to come back here to get soaked in Nature. Couldn't ask for more

A glimpse of our field notebook



Some of the conference materials

Jungle Myna

As much as we cherished the serene natural surroundings of the hills, it was disheartening to witness increasing signs of human interference – reckless construction and improper waste disposal – slowly disturbing the ancient harmony between humans and nature.

We hope to return in the winter season, when the skies are clearer and the chances of spotting more avian visitors are higher.

As John Muir said, the mountains are calling, and I must go…

The list of birds seen during the trip:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*	28	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*
2	Asian Koel	*Eudynamys scolopaceus*	29	Long-tailed Shrike	*Lanius schach*
3	Asian Tit	*Parus cinereus*	30	Oriental Magpie Robin	*Copsychus saularis*
4	Baya Weaver	*Ploceus philippinus*	31	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*
5	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*	32	Pied Bushchat	*Saxicola caprata*
6	Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*	33	Plum-headed Parakeet	*Psittacula cyanocephala*
7	Brahminy Starling	*Sturnia pagodarum*	34	Purple Sunbird	*Cinnyris asiaticus*
8	Common Hawk Cuckoo	*Hierococcyx varius*	35	Red Junglefowl	*Gallus gallus*
9	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*	36	Red-billed Blue Magpie	*Urocissa erythroryncha*
10	Large-billed Crow	*Corvus macrorhynchos*	37	Red-billed Leiothrix	*Leiothrix lutea*
11	Common Tailorbird	*Orthotomus sutorius*	38	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*
12	Common Woodshrike	*Tephrodornis pondicerianus*	39	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*
13	Eastern Cattle Egret	*Ardea coromanda*	40	Red-whiskered Bulbul	*Pycnonotus jocosus*
14	Eastern Red-rumped Swallow	*Cecropis daurica*	41	Rock Pigeon	*Feral Pigeon*
15	Fulvous-breasted Woodpecker	*Dendrocopos macei*	42	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*
16	Grey-breasted Prinia	*Prinia hodgsonii*	43	Rusty-cheeked Scimitar Babbler	*Erythrogenys erythrogenys*
17	Greater Coucal	*Centropus sinensis*	44	Scaly-breasted Munia	*Lonchura punctulata*
18	Himalayan Bulbul	*Pycnonotus leucogenys*	45	Spotted Dove	*Spilopelia chinensis*
19	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*	46	Square-tailed Drongo Cuckoo	*Surniculus lugubris*
20	Indian Grey Hornbill	*Ocyceros birostris*	47	Streaked Laughingthrush	*Trochalopteron lineatum*
21	Indian Peafowl	*Pavo cristatus*	48	Wedge-tailed Green Pigeon	*Treron sphenurus*
22	Indian Robin	*Copsychus fulicatus*	49	White-throated Fantail	*Rhipidura albicollis*
23	Indian White-eye	*Zosterops palpebrosus*	50	Wire-tailed Swallow	*Hirundo smithii*
24	Jungle Babbler	*Argya striata*	51	Yellow-eyed Babbler	*Chrysomma sinense*
25	Jungle Myna	*Acridotheres fuscus*	52	Diurnal raptor sp.	*Accipitriformes / Falconiformes sp.*
26	Laughing Dove	*Spilopelia senegalensis*	53	Flowerpecker sp.	*Dicaeidae sp.*
27	Lesser Whistling-duck	*Dendrocygna javanica*	54	Parakeet sp.	*Psittaciformes sp.*

Some other photographs taken during the trip:

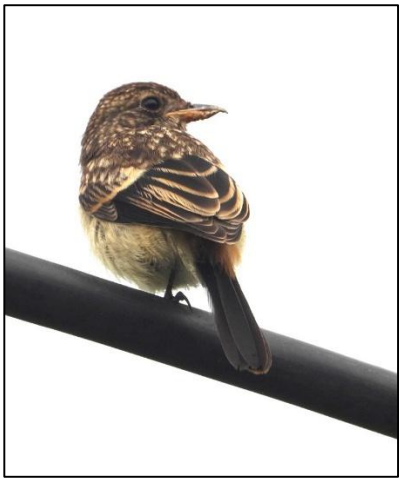
Purple Water Lily

A view of the WII Dehradun campus

A statue of the Sarus Crane at WII

Purple Sunbird male

Lesser Whistling-duck



Pied Bushchat juvenile

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FLOWING CALM: EMBRACING THE RIVER'S RHYTHM

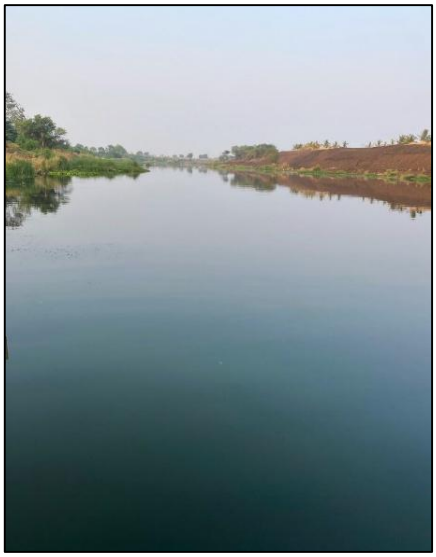
Report: Margosa Rewild Resort, Sanga Reddy Dist, April 27-28, 2024

Text: Shraddha Vyas; Photos: Rishik Modukuru

Meeting my own calm self by the river

Away from the heavy traffic noise, away from the hustle bustle of the city by a short drive from Hyderabad city, near Sanga Reddy I found a safe natural heaven with the serenity of Manjeera River flowing by the resort.

A walk into the woods at the resort



Serenity by the river

Margosa Rewild Resort, where we stayed, is definitely a must visit destination for any birdwatcher with its beautiful river, greenery and peaceful ambience. We had an idea about the resort being full of natural beauty, but the view of the river by the resort especially at sunset and sunrise was completely mind blowing. The calm peaceful woods with wooden benches by the river side was just the perfect spot for any bird watcher to catch a glimpse of the waterbirds catching their prey.

The sun playing hide and seek

A few boatmen silently fishing through small fishing nets also caught my attention, and the entire scene seemed like a beautiful painting.

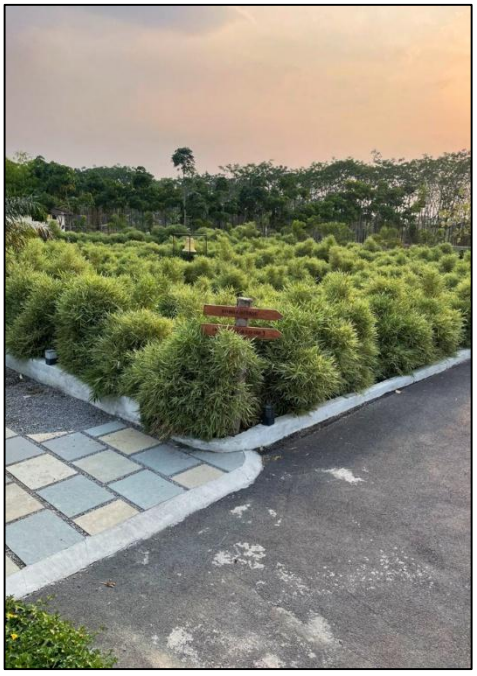
Located 16.5km from Margosa Rewild Resort is Manjeera Wildlife Sanctuary, situated near the Manjeera river and its reservoir. Established in 1978, it is known for its diverse ecosystem with lots of birdlife, wildlife and also crocodile breeding. The sanctuary follows the river for 36km. It protects a wide range of wildlife, around 70 species of birds, as well as submergent and emergent vegetation like ipome and Typha.

One of the added attractions of the sanctuary is that it can be accessed through boat and that can be a boon for birdwatchers. Manjeera Sanctuary is famous for variety of migratory water birds like Bar-headed Goose, Ruddy Shelduck, Common Teal, Garganey, Lesser Adjutant and Common Pochard.

We had been to the resort during peak summer season, around the last week of April, and so were not fortunate enough to sight many of the birds. Some of the birds sighted were only in the early morning at sunrise and water birds in the river especially around sunset.

The beautiful time around sunset

The best part of my stay at the resort was spending time watching the Manjeera river, the tranquillity of waters, the swift breeze across them, and the beautiful skies. I thoroughly enjoyed the morning walks amidst the green canopies and the sunset by the river. An added attraction for the kids was the green maze made of small hedges which was fun to run around play in between.



The green maze

Overall the experience was great, a nice 'green' break so close to the city. It must be more suitable to visit the resort in winters where we could get lucky to sight some migratory birds as well by the river. We hope to do that next time!

Some of the birds we saw are listed below:

Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name	Sl No	Species Name	Scientific Name
1	White-throated Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnenis*	6	Oriental Magpie Robin	*Copsychus saularis*
2	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*	7	Indian Cuckoo	*Cuculus micropterus*
3	Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*	8	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	*Cyornis rubeculoides*
4	Little Cormorant	*Microcarbo niger*	9	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*
5	Oriental Darter	*Anhinga melanogaster*	10	Coppersmith Barbet	*Psilopogon haemacephalus*

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Bird of the Month

Text and Photos: Umesh Mani

Sri Lanka Bay Owl (*Phodilus assimilis*)

Sri Lanka Bay Owl (Thattekad, Kerala, October 02, 2017)

Order:	Strigiformes
Family:	Tytonidae
Genus:	*Phodilus*
Species:	*P. assimilis*
Size:	22-27 cm
IUCN Status:	Least Concern

Description & distribution: The Sri Lanka Bay Owl is a member of the Tytonidae family of bay owls. It was earlier considered a subspecies of the Oriental Bay Owl *P. badius*, but has now been elevated to full species status some years back, based on differences in call and plumage, and due to clearly disjunct geographical distribution. The genus name *Phodilus*, from the Ancient Greek *phōs* for 'light' or 'daylight', and *deilos* for 'timid' or 'cowardly', refers to its tendency to mostly stay hidden in thick shrubbery during the day.

It is a smallish owl with short rounded wings and tail, and short legs that are feathered till the feet. The head is distinctively shaped, with a broad forehead, V-shaped frontal shield, oblong facial shields that protrude as short ear tufts, broad dark vertical stripe running through the large all-dark eyes and a dark necklace that demarcates the head from the underbody. It has brown upperparts with heavy spotting, golden nape and scapulars, and pronounced barring on wings and tail. Pinkish white underparts have variable dark spotting on breast and flanks, reducing down the belly. Bill is yellowish, while the toes are pale greyish brown. Sexes are alike. Juvenile is presumed to be similar to adult, but is undescribed.

The Sri Lanka Bay Owl is endemic to Sri Lanka and the Western Ghats south of Goa, and mostly in Kerala. Two subspecies are recognized: The Sri Lankan race, *P. a. assimilis*, is the nominate, while the Indian subspecies, *P. a. ripleyi*, is the other subspecies.

Habitat & behaviour: The Sri Lanka Bay Owl is very secretive and rarely seen – it is often detected only when an injured specimen is found. Hence it is believed to be rare throughout its range. It prefers subtropical or tropical montane forests and high-altitude grasslands, wet evergreen or mixed evergreen-deciduous forests, mangroves, or partially harvested forests, on level terrain or in the foothills. Not much is known about its diet, but it is believed to hunt beneath the forest canopy, where it probably hunts nocturnal rodents and invertebrates. During the day it is seen to roost on relatively open perches, 1-1.5m above the ground.

Nesting: The Sri Lanka Bay Owl breeds mainly during winter. During this period, its song, an eerie whistling *whi-whoo-ee-yo*, consisting of multiple whistles with many inflections, can often be heard. The call is a series of 3-4 tremulous whistles, the notes initially rising and then falling. Nesting habits are very poorly known – one nesting record from Sri Lanka showed three young of different sizes, indicating that they may have hatched asynchronously. The nest was built in a broken-topped fishtail palm.

Local name: The Sri Lanka Bay Owl is known as *'Riply moonga'* in Malayalam and *'Bassa'* in Sinhala.

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For information, write to: Deccan Birders, PO Box 45, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500034. **Website:** www.deccanbirders.in. **E-group:** http://groups.google.co.in/group/deccanbirders. **Society membership** (in Rs.): Annual: 500 per annum; Student: 200 per annum; Corporate: 2000 per annum; Life: 3000. (*Add Rs 75 for outstation cheques.)*